

NEWSLETTER



ARBORETA & BOTANIC GARDENS

prepared by the public services division

April 10, 1972

EDUCATION DIVISION

George Spalding, Botanical Information Consultant, has been frequently asked what he does. His answer: Mine has to be the most interesting position on the Arboretum staff. Not only do I meet a variety of people, but have to deal with interesting and sometimes braintwisting questions. Most of the inquiries come in by phone, with the load varying from 10 to 50 calls per day, according to the season. Spring and fall are really busy times when callers are planting, pruning, or getting ready to plant a new lawn. Probably half the questions concern lawns, how to install one, which are the best grasses to use, what will grow under an ash tree, or what's making big round holes in my lawn. (Gophers). Of course some questions are repeated many times and the answers become routine, but never boring because of the feeling that the caller needs help.

Then a question comes in that really stumps you. For example, why does the Peppermint Peach have two colors of flowers. (Still working on this one). Finding the scientific name for a plant where only the common name is known can be an interesting hunt. Take the Korean Cherry, it sounded easy but was not to be found in any of the common or less common reference books. Finally it was located in a very old, privately printed book on the flowers of Korea. Finding the answers to the hard ones brings great satisfaction.

Special assignments and projects are another interesting aspect of this position. A rough draft of a history of the Arboretum has just been finished. I was asked to do this because of my long association with the grounds and the people involved in our development from the very beginning.

The Plant of The Week, which appears in the Pasadena Star-News, is another interesting assignment. This is now in its fifth year and has been the means of

acquainting the public with many of the plants growing on the grounds.

The most satisfying aspect of this position is the opportunity to make friends for the Arboretum. When I receive repeat calls from individuals who have been pleased with the advice given them and call again when they have another horticultural problem, it is a real satisfaction to know you have helped with the right answer to a problem.

RESEARCH DIVISION

The Research Division Seminar is a weekly affair in the Research Seminar Room every Friday from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. In the past months we have had reports and discussions on topics such as, "Evergreen and deciduous plants," and "Studies on Eucalyptus." In the latter topic, we have covered pertinent information on early botanical records, taxonomic treatments, disease problems, genetics, chemical constituents, ecology, and geographical distribution of species of Eucalyptus. Some of these reports and discussions will be published in Lasca Leaves in the future.

In the weeks to come, chosen topics include: (1) Photoperiodism and Biological Clock, (2) current knowledge on the biology of Armillaria mellea, (3) Aloes, (4) stomatal diffusion porometer and chemoluminescent ozone monitor, (5) some interesting plants in our collection, (6) studies of leaf water loss related to plant ignitibility, (7) scleroid patterns in camellias, (8) experiments on pollen storage, (9) volatile oils in plants and their effect on ignition and combustion, (10) the genus Erythrina, (11) the origin and evolution of plant virus, and (12) the genus Callistemon.

Staff members are welcome to participate in these seminars. Weekly notification on speakers and topics will be posted on all bulletin boards.

Dr. Cliff Parks, our former plant geneticist, visited the Arboretum from March 27 to March 29. He took some of his breeding stocks of camellia which he intends to investigate further at the University of North Carolina. He is presently assistant professor at the university and continues to work on camellia and cotton. He is due to be promoted to associate professor this fall.

PUBLIC SERVICES DIVISION

For quite a few years now, the Arboretum has offered public bird walks on the first Sunday of every month. The walks have consisted of the leader, currently Bob Copper or Ray Robinson, taking a group (30 average) around the grounds for an hour and a half pointing out birds. Local Audubon affiliates have suggested changing this format into a bird identification training series similar to one currently conducted at South Coast by Mrs. Shirley Wells. Plans have been made to do this at the Arboretum. Each month a different group of birds will be studied, based on the season and the interest of Audubon members. The first half hour of each session will be indoor instruction utilizing slides, specimens, etc. to point out the fine points of bird identification. The remaining hour will be spent in the field giving the birdwatchers the opportunity to put their new knowledge to use. We will report in a future newsletter on how this new series works out.

DESCANSO DIVISION

As most of the staff probably already knows, Don Graf, our senior tour guide at Descanso, has been active in youth work in La Canada for a number of years. We are pleased to note that last month he received the local Founders' Day Award for his work and with the award an honorary life membership in the Parent-Teachers Association. And to round things off, Don last week accepted an invitation to become a member of the La Canada Kiwanis Club.

Mark Anthony reports that roses are very early this year and should be in good bloom by the time you read this. He says also that the lilacs are blooming now and should be fine until the middle of April.

ARBORETUM DIVISION

Be sure to visit the new vegetable garden behind the potting shed in the Demonstration Home Gardens. The area was initiated last month when Takao Niiya gave his Sunday afternoon lecture on vegetables, and

already some of the vegetables are ready for harvesting. As an adjunct to the vegetable garden there is a demonstration compost bin, and additional displays in the potting area. Chuck Hewitt has been instrumental in developing some of the latter.

We have received mixed reactions on the colors of the kiosk recently placed in front of the California Arboretum Foundation, but there seems to be a unanimous feeling that it is attracting attention, and people are reading the announcements.

Behind the gatehouse you will find a table displaying some of the plant material in bloom on the grounds. This is being maintained by Janice Camlin of the Las Voluntarias.

A number of the staff chose to take their Good Friday time off in the morning in order to visit the UCLA Japanese Gardens. The timing couldn't have been more perfect. The gardens were in brilliant color with azaleas, and the weather was great!

At the Iris Show held this month, Bill Hawkinson's entry, 'Queen of the Show,' won top prize.

Congratulations to Larry Geerer who's wife had a baby boy last Sunday the 26th. The boy was born through natural childbirth in the Geerer's own home.

SOUTH COAST

During the past year, attendance at South Coast has doubled. In anticipation of an even busier year, we have given our park benches a fresh coat of paint.

Bob Seitzinger has returned to work after a three-week absence due to an operation on his arm. Welcome back.

Birds observed on the March walk included: great blue heron, Costa's hummingbird, red-shafted flicker, scrub jay, common crow, ruby-crowned kinglet, loggerhead shrike, orange-crowned warbler, lesser goldfinch, fox sparrow, and mourning dove. Others observed nesting were: rufous-sided towhee, house finch, and Anna's hummingbird. Migration will be in progress next month.